

READING 1: Isaiah 7, 10-16

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.”

¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you^[c] a sign: The virgin^[d] will conceive and give birth to a son, and^[e] will call him Immanuel.^[f] ¹⁵ He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, ¹⁶ for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

READING 2: Matthew 1, 18-end

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[d]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[f] because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^[g] (which means “God with us”).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

SERMON:

The readings from Isaiah and Matthew bring us face to face with the mystery of God's plan and human response.

Isaiah speaks of a sign: "*The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"

Centuries later, Matthew tells us how that prophecy found its fulfillment in Mary, a young woman of Nazareth, who was asked to bear the Son of God.

- Isaiah's prophecy was given in a time of fear and uncertainty. King Ahaz faced enemies, and God promised a sign of hope: a child called *Immanuel* — “God with us.”
- This promise was not just for Ahaz, but for all generations. It was God's declaration that He would not abandon His people.
- The prophecy hung in history like a seed waiting for soil. It needed a human “yes” to take root.

Our Matthew reading is also the reading for Joseph's dedicated day in the church calendar – March 19th. And the gospel writer tells us of:

- Joseph's dilemma,
- Mary's pregnancy,
- and the angel's reassurance:
“Do not be afraid... what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

- Here, the ancient promise meets human obedience. Mary's willingness to bear the Christ child, and Joseph's willingness to protect and trust, bring the prophecy to life.
- The fragile “yes” of two ordinary people becomes the hinge of salvation history.

But What If Mary Had Said No?

- Imagine Mary refusing: “This is too much. Too dangerous. Too costly.”
- God's purposes are never thwarted — He could have chosen another way. Yet the beauty of the Incarnation lies in God's partnership with humanity.

- Mary’s “yes” is not coerced. It is freely given. And in that freedom, we see the depth of God’s respect for human agency.
- Her “yes” becomes the doorway through which Christ enters the world. Without it, the story would be different — perhaps colder, less intimate, less human.

There is a Power in Saying Yes

- Mary’s courage reminds us that God’s promises often wait for our response.
- Each of us faces moments when God whispers: “*Will you trust me? Will you carry my light into the world?*”
- Our “yes” may not change the course of history as Mary’s did, but it can change the course of someone’s life — a child, a neighbour, a stranger in need.
- Saying “yes” to God is never easy. It may bring misunderstanding, sacrifice, or risk. But it also brings Immanuel: God with us.

- In a world of uncertainty, God still offers signs of hope.
- The question is not whether God will act — He has already acted in Christ. The question is whether WE will respond.
- Mary’s “yes” invites us to examine our own hearts:
 - Will we say “yes” to forgiveness instead of resentment?
 - Will we say “yes” to generosity instead of fear?
 - Will we say “yes” to God’s call, even when it disrupts our plans?

Isaiah promised a child called Immanuel. Matthew shows us that promise fulfilled in Jesus. And at the heart of it all stands Mary — a young woman who could have said no, but instead said yes.

Her “yes” changed the world.

Our “yes” can change our corner of it.

So let us not ask only “*What if Mary had said no?*” but also “*What if I say yes?*” **Amen**